United Nations A/61/602–S/2006/929

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
30 November 2006

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-first session
Agenda item 19
Question of Cyprus

Security Council
Sixty-first year

Letter dated 29 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 29 November 2006, addressed to you by Kemal Gökeri, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, forwarding the letter of Mehmet Ali Talat, President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of Mr. Talat's letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 19, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Baki İlkin
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 29 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey herewith a copy of the letter dated 29 November 2006 addressed to you by Mehmet Ali Talat, President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see enclosure).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its enclosure could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 19, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) M. Kemal **Gökeri**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Enclosure

Further to my letter (S/2005/666) dated 12 October 2005 concerning the rising trend of racism, chauvinism and ultra-nationalism among the Greek Cypriots, the fast deteriorating situation and the reflection of this trend in the form of maltreatment of the Turkish Cypriots visiting South Cyprus, has prompted me to bring again to your kind attention the following concerns of the Turkish Cypriot side.

As you would recall, the reply to my previous letter came through the letter (S/2005/722) of the Greek Cypriot representative in New York dated 16 November 2005. Ironically, instead of treating the content of my correspondence seriously and taking necessary measures in preventing racist attitudes in South Cyprus, the said administration has opted to choose to deny the content of my letter and alleged that it contained suspicious and groundless assertions. Since that time, the maltreatment of Turkish Cypriots visiting South Cyprus, which has been increasing in an alarming manner, has unfortunately corroborated the content and main thrust of my letter. We do not witness a day passing without an attack or harassment of the Turkish Cypriots by the Greek Cypriot authorities and civilians. On the contrary, I would also like to remind you again with pleasure that since the inception of the reciprocal crossings, almost no incident against the Greek Cypriots visiting the Turkish Cypriot side has been witnessed.

Some examples of the continuing Greek Cypriot policy of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of the Turkish Cypriots which can be described as the tip of the iceberg are listed below. There exist dozens of other similar cases which are well documented but not included in this letter for reasons of practicality and brevity.

At the outset, it is interesting to note that one of the victims of such attacks has been bi-communal events designed to contribute to the confidence building between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots. On 18 January 2006, a bi-communal event, Together for Peace, organized at the Melina Mercouri hall by the DISY (Greek Cypriot main opposition party) and the Republican Turkish Party and United Forces (main coalition party of the Turkish Cypriot government) on the Greek side of Nicosia, was first disrupted when a Greek speaking man phoned the Greek Cypriot private television station Sigma asserting that there was a bomb at the venue. The bomb squad arrived on the scene to investigate, but the information turned out to be a hoax. However, it was discovered that thirteen car tires had been slashed and leaflets with written obscenities were also stuck to cars. It is interesting to note that the Greek Cypriot leader, Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos, condemned this vandalism two days later, only after intense criticism directed from the Greek Cypriot main opposition party DISY. (Greek Cypriot daily, *Cyprus Mail*, 21 January 2006)

On 13 February 2006 again another bi-communal event organized by the Cyprus Literature Union and dedicated to the Turkish Cypriot poetry fell victim to the vandals. This time four cars had their tires slashed, two belonging to two Turkish Cypriots, one to a Greek Cypriot and one to the Bulgarian Embassy. (Greek Cypriot daily, *Cyprus Mail*, 15 February 2006)

On 27 June 2006, Mr. Osman Sarper, a Turkish Cypriot architect was arrested by the Greek Cypriot police while crossing to South Cyprus through the Metehan (Ayios Dhometios) checkpoint for possessing building plans and documents related to land, which was claimed to be formerly owned by the Greek Cypriots. After eight days of detention, Mr. Sarper was brought before the Greek Cypriot Nicosia District Court and despite the medical reports stating that he had some serious heart problems; he was kept in jail for

seven more days. Furthermore, the Greek Cypriot administration refused the medical examination of Mr. Osman Sarper by his Turkish Cypriot doctor from North Cyprus. Deterioration of his health and intensive protests of the family and the Turkish Cypriot non-governmental organizations, forced the Greek Cypriot administration to release Mr. Sarper on bail on 11 July 2006. Here, it should also be noted that the property issue stands at the core of the Cyprus problem and it is one of the core issues to be dealt with within the context of full-fledged negotiations aimed at a comprehensive settlement. No doubt, such attempts are deteriorating further the confidence between the two sides. However, many other Turkish Cypriots are still being detained and harassed by the Greek Cypriot police for the same reason.

A minor but a serious discriminatory treatment that a group of Turkish Cypriots have encountered at a restaurant in Lefkara, South Cyprus, is a further indication of the rising trend of ultra-nationalism among the Greek Cypriots. On 3 September 2006, a group of Turkish Cypriots, who were visiting Lefkara, went to a coffee shop to have a drink. Despite the fact that the waiter of the restaurant, who was also the owner, were serving other customers present there, the Turkish Cypriots waited a long time without being asked what they wanted to have. Moreover, when they asked for a cup of coffee, the owner of the coffee shop refused to serve and told them that *"Turkish Cypriots cannot have coffee here."* (Turkish Cypriot daily, *Kıbrıs*, 5 September 2006 – Greek Cypriot newspaper, *Sunday Mail*, 26 November 2006)

On 11 September 2006, Mr. Murat Kanatlı, a journalist and the editor of the Turkish Cypriot newspaper *Yeniçağ*, an ardent supporter of unification in the island, was subjected to a humiliating search by a Greek Cypriot customs officer while passing to South Cyprus at the Ledra Palace checkpoint. According to an article published at the Greek Cypriot daily *Cyprus Mail* dated 13 September 2006, despite the fact that Mr. Kanatlı showed the customs officer his press card issued by the "Cyprus Journalists' Union", the officer not only continued to search his personal notes but also humiliated him by telling him that he was looking for ecstasy drugs. When Mr. Kanatlı said to the officer he requested to speak to the director, the officer responded by saying if Mr. Kanatlı had a complaint he would be the one he should apply to.

The Turkish daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet* dated 21 September 2006, reported that Mr. Ozan Ceyhun, former member of the European Parliament and the member of the German Social Democratic Party, was assaulted by eight Greek Cypriot youngsters in front of the Hilton Hotel situated at the Greek Cypriot part of Nicosia while traveling in a taxi carrying Turkish Cypriot number plates. Mr. Ceyhun also told the newspaper that apart from attacking the taxi, the perpetrators also spat on the face of the Turkish Cypriot driver. The Turkish Cypriot columnist, Mr. Başaran Düzgün, another well known journalist for his articles favoring the unification of Cyprus, in his article published in the Turkish Cypriot daily *Kıbrıs* dated 22 September 2006, commented that most of the attacks to the Turkish Cypriots by the ultra-nationalist Greek Cypriots occur at the vicinity of the Hilton Hotel and despite the ongoing appeals of the victims, the Greek Cypriot police still refrain from taking the necessary measures in that area.

On 15 November 2006, Ms. Sevgül Uludağ, a well known journalist and researcher, who is writing articles for the rapprochement of the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots and also about missing persons issue in Cyprus, has been physically attacked and verbally insulted by the members of the Greek Cypriot ultra-nationalist group Chrysi Avghi (Golden Dawn), while crossing from the Ledra Palace checkpoint. The same group also damaged the car of Mr. Aziz Ener, another Turkish Cypriot pro-unification journalist, with iron sticks and verbally insulted other Turkish Cypriots passing through the checkpoint. As

a result of these attacks, the crossing through the Ledra Palace checkpoint was temporarily halted. (Turkish Cypriot daily, *Yenidüzen*, 16 November 2006)

Most alarmingly, on 22 November 2006, about 15-20 racist Greek Cypriot youngsters, believed to be members of the Greek Cypriot ultra-nationalist group National Voice of Youth with a Greek Soul (EFEN), all wearing masks and armed with planks of wood, entered the grounds of the English School (situated at the Greek Cypriot side of Nicosia) during recess, located a group of Turkish Cypriot students and beat them up. The President of the English School Union said that this would not have happened if some newspapers (Greek Cypriot) had not provoked a minor incident occurred before between a Turkish Cypriot student and a Greek Cypriot student from the same school regarding wearing religious symbols. (All the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot newspapers dated 22 and 23 November 2006 covered the attack intensively, most of them in their first pages). In this context, I would like to stress that after all these attacks perpetrated by the members of the Greek Cypriot ultra-nationalist groups, it is also hard to understand why the Greek Cypriot leadership is still refraining to take preventive measures towards this racist establishments.

Although the Greek Cypriot leader, Mr. Tassos Papadopoulos was compelled to condemn the attack, describe it as a criminal act and state that religious criteria had never been the reason or cause for conflict between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots, he tried to conceal the organized nature of this incident by describing the attackers merely as irresponsible troublemakers. However, the Stop the War Coalition – Cyprus, a bi-communal platform including the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots, has described the incident at the English School as *"an organized attack by fascists against Turkish Cypriots."* (Greek Cypriot newspaper, *Sunday Mail*, 26 November 2006)

Furthermore, the statement which Mr. Papadopoulos had made during the opening ceremony of a monument in the memory of Greek Cypriot soldiers who lost their lives during the events in 1974 compels us to question his sincerity in his condemnation of the incident at the British School. According to the Greek Cypriot daily *Politis* dated 20 November 2006, during his speech at the ceremony, Papadopoulos said and I quote; *"The messages of heroism for those who lost their lives for their homeland shall not be silenced by the voices of the imams. (As Papadopoulos was delivering his speech, ezan could be heard from a mosque in the vicinity)."* It is a well known and undeniable fact in social sciences that prejudices against any religion often manifests itself in general negative attitudes, such as violence, harassment, discrimination and stereotyping in the societies. Such irresponsible and provocative statements given by the Greek Cypriot leadership would not only deteriorate the already fragile situation but would also cause a serious blow to the ongoing efforts of the UN to facilitate a comprehensive solution of the Cyprus problem. In this context, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) shadow report published in 2005, entitled *Racism in Cyprus*, has made serious warnings to the Greek Cypriot administration and stated that; *"Islamophobia has always been present in Cyprus, to a lesser extent though, due to the Cyprus problem. However, it has now taken larger dimensions as anyone of Muslim religion is not only presumed to be a potential collaborator to Turkey but also a potential terrorist. This is shown by the Police's eagerness to arrest Muslim students and deport them on suspicion of membership to terrorist organizations without any particular examination of their case,..."*

Another absurd example showing the extent of the ultra-nationalist hysteria among the Greek Cypriots is related to tomatoes brought into South Cyprus from the Turkish Cypriot side. Although the EU Commission declared in its report [COM(2006)551] dated 25 September 2006 that tomatoes being traded through the Green Line Regulation were not originated from Turkey, the Greek Cypriot daily *Machi*, an ultra-nationalist newspaper, kept

abusing the issue by insisting that the tomatoes produced in Turkey were coming to South Cyprus through North and seriously endangering the health of the Greek Cypriots. Furthermore, the Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment of the Greek Cypriot administration, Mr. Fotis Fotiou, even ordered the officers of his Ministry to check all the harbors and markets for Turkish tomatoes. (Greek Cypriot daily, *Phileleftheros*, dated 26 November 2006)

I am sure you will also agree with me that education is one of the most important aspects in shaping individuals, social institutions and society itself. In this context, the Turkish Cypriot side has taken a number of concrete steps designed to contribute to confidence building and mutual trust between the two sides in the island. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot side has unilaterally implemented a project for re-writing of history textbooks in order to eliminate enmity and hatred between the two peoples. However, it is disturbing and discouraging to observe the total lack of movement of the Greek Cypriot side on the issue, particularly in the light of extent of the nationalistic rhetoric against the Turkish Cypriot people contained in the textbooks. A well known Greek Cypriot scholar on education, Mr. Panayiotis Persianis, in his study entitled *Education in Cyprus in the Light of EU Accession* (published in Nicosia, 1996) noted that history of the Greek Cypriot education is a strong case of *"using education for political ends."* This analysis explains the reluctance of the Greek Cypriot leadership for removing the anti-Turkish nationalistic language from the textbooks.

Surveys carried out among the Greek Cypriot students by reliable Greek Cypriot sources clearly reveal how effective the education is in shaping the attitudes of the whole society in South Cyprus towards racist and ultra-nationalistic attitudes. Therefore, I deem it necessary to bring to your kind attention some of these studies, all of which were carried out by the Greek Cypriots.

A survey entitled "Racism and Xenophobia" that has been carried out among the Greek Cypriot high school students in South Cyprus revealed that 46.5% of the student population has racist views, with 14% admitting to be racist. According to the same study majority of the students believe that the Greek race and Orthodox sect of Christianity are the best in the world and 75.4% of the students would oppose the building of a mosque in their neighborhood. Furthermore, 86.5% of the Greek Cypriot children deny job opportunities to Turkish Cypriots. (Greek Cypriot daily, *Politis*, 6 March 2005)

A study conducted by the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation of the Greek Cypriot administration among the public also revealed that 63% of Greek Cypriots within the age group of 18 – 24 are against the idea of living with Turkish Cypriots. (Greek Cypriot Daily, *Cyprus Mail*, 5 April 2006). This result is a clear confirmation of the anti-Turkish Cypriot feelings among the Greek Cypriot youth. A political analyst from South Cyprus, Mr. Louis Igoumenides had also stated in the same issue of the newspaper that *"It is unfortunately very apparent that schools on the island do promote nationalism to pupils from a very young age prompting young people nowadays to resent anyone that is not Greek or Christian"*.

Unfortunately, this anti-Turkish Cypriot feeling is not only confined among the Greek Cypriot youth. Another study that has been conducted by *Phileleftheros* newspaper among 11-12 year-old children in an elementary school to determine the views of the Greek Cypriot children concerning the Turkish Cypriots has shown parallel results. The newspaper stated that the results of the study indicated that the children are skeptical towards Turkish Cypriots; they define the Turkish Cypriots as bad and undesirable

outsiders and also blame them for the Cyprus problem. The results of the study also showed that the said children do not know much regarding the Turkish Cypriots and 62% of them said that when they see a Turkish Cypriot for the first time they get surprised since the image of a Turkish Cypriot in their mind is totally different. The children were also asked what they knew about Turkish Cypriots and what they felt towards them. 36% of the children expressed negative opinions concerning the Turkish Cypriots and defined them as "generally bad, poor, mean, filthy/sinful". The children also expressed that the Turkish Cypriots are ugly and of dark complexion, and the majority of the children stated that they hate the Turkish Cypriots. (Greek Cypriot daily, *Philelefiheros*, 30 July 2006)

In the letter of the Greek Cypriot representative in New York, dated 16 November 2005, it is also claimed that the Greek Cypriot administration is fully respecting the promotion and the protection of human rights in the island. However, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) in its shadow report published in 2005 entitled *Racism in Cyprus* also states that *"Cyprus (Greek Cypriot administration) has very high scores on ratification of international human rights instruments, including antidiscrimination instruments and with regard to transposition Directives. The major problem however, is also the substance of the issue, is their effective implementation."* Moreover, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Third report on Cyprus adopted on 16 December 2005 has made a noteworthy advice to the Greek Cypriot administration and I quote: *"ECRI recommends that the Cypriot (Greek) authorities pay attention and address problems of racism and racial discrimination facing Turkish Cypriot citizens."* In the light of these serious warnings from two human rights institutions, the Greek Cypriot administration is not convincing when it depicts such offences as "minor" and "isolated" incidents and claims that it is respecting human rights.

As the incidents and the studies given above clearly indicate, the Greek Cypriot governmental policies are the main reason behind the rising trend of racism, xenophobia, ultra-nationalism and unfortunately Islamophobia in South Cyprus. In this respect, Mr. Nicos Trimiklionitis, the Director of the Cyprus Labor Institute, INEK-PEO and Director for the National Focal Point, (RAXEN), in his paper published in *The Cyprus Review* (Vol.15, Fall 2004 edition) described the governmental policies of the Greek Cypriot administration as *"institutional racism, underlying the whole legal and administration system."*

In view of the foregoing, I call on all the international community in general and the UN in particular to take urgent action for the abolition of all forms of racial and religious discrimination, cruel and inhuman treatment of the Turkish Cypriots, originating from the decades-old policies of the Greek Cypriot administration which seek to dominate the island at the expense of the Turkish Cypriot people.

The above-mentioned events covering the period between January 2006 - November 2006 are by no means exhaustive, I will continue to inform Your Excellency regularly on the account of the racist oriented events carried out in Southern Cyprus.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under the agenda item 19, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mehmet Ali **Talat**
President